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"The Age of Chivalry is gone."
BURKE

Various and infinitely diversified as the springs and sources of action which have been employed in the drama of time by the wise dispose of events are found to be, the speculative observer cannot fail to remark in the history of man a similarity of circumstances causing in different agents, striking parallels in the aspect of things! The nature of humanity remains the same, though modified by a number of

contingencies - as the great source of day retains its size and splendor, though clouds may curtain and obscure it; or the intervention of another planet occasion a temporary apparent change. This consideration, suggests another; Matter is constantly changing & modifying, but the soul knows no change. Matter may still be essentially the same, however altered or portioned; but the individual soul secure in its own unity and bearing the impress of its origin can know no change in itself, though like the hidden gem, it may be incrusted in the days of ignorance, with the thick shadows of barbarity.

Our present design, is briefly to notice a remarkable similarity in the general appearance of men & things in one of these parallel chapters in record time I mean in the age of ancient Greece and that of Chivalry.

Of the state of Greece about the time of the siege of Troy and in the days

which preceded it, we have but a vague and uncertain account. This however we know that it was under the dominion of many petty tyrants. Such an effect did the subversion of Rome produce, in the establishment of the feudal system. Both ages were wrapt in the profoundest darkness - save where a transient ray of departed glory lingered amid their obscurity. The only light of Greece was the faint glimmering of tradition, handed down from the patriarch who survived the deluge and his descendants - tradition so perverted and teaching such monstrous absurdities that even heathens in an age of darkness, must have regarded them rather as the offspring of imagination a tools of priestcraft than as the reliefs of truth. So in the age of Chivalry, except the knowledge confined to convents and to cloistered the stories of saints and miracles, engrossed the belief of the vulgar, while the pure spirit of the Christian faith, pined like a solitary

ermits, and saw her worship fled.

Such was the strong resemblance between the causes, which produced such corresponding effects. From the feudal system, chivalry arose; and from the petty tyrannies of Greece, a similar civilization of society resulted. Let us endeavour to point out the most striking features of resemblance, in their warlike religious and civil characters.

Petty tyrannies naturally produced in both, a constant succession of petty quarrels and wars. The pursuit of arms became most necessary; and necessity made it the most honorable. As to the refinement, which Chivalry with its corresponding institutions produced, we cannot expect to find it among the semi-barbarous Greeks. Still, we do not seek altogether in vain, for traces of courtesy, honorable feelings of humanity, generosity and benevolence among these Achilles, the terrible and invincible in war, implacable and deadly in hate,

persevering and dreadful in vengeance had yet within him, all the constituents of a true knight of Christendom. The mangled body of his fallen foe, which his ferocity had mutilated, and his ravenous spirit, pursuing his enemy even beyond the grave, had consigned to dogs and vultures, was easily bought by the tears of a father. Many more examples might be produced, but it is sufficient, cursorily to notice, how well the haughty politeness of the members of the chivalric order, agrees with Homer's description of combats — how woman's cause could nerve the arms of both, and bid them relinquish all the comforts of domestic life, forsake their firesides and patrimony, and yield their lives to the foe.

Chivalry produced the order of knighthood. It may be said, that we find no similar institution among the

Greeks. But, as has been well remarked by an author, from whom many of these observations are borrowed, what were Theseus and Hercules but wandering knights-errant, the Amadis de Gaul and Lancelot of antiquity? The former, as well as the latter, not only wandered in quest of adventures, but were reputed to have performed as many marvellous exploits. The Grecian hero too, had his mistress as well as the knights who, if not equally peerless had certainly as much influence; since through her agency, the most redoubtable of all her champions, suffered his manhood to slumber amidst her attendants — and finally, mad to the heart, tore up the forests of Oeta — and while its rocks and mountains rebellowed to his roar ascended his self created funeral pyre and died the victim of an angry woman.

Again, we find among the Greeks,

an Institution by no means dissimilar to that of Knight and squire. If indeed there is any essential difference, it consists more in the name, and rank, and different estimation, than in the essential services, which the attending friend among the ancients, and squire among the knights, were obligated to perform. For instance, Patroclus was to all intents and purposes, the squire of Achilles. The only distinguishing particular, is, that he was elevated to a higher grade in the esteem, affection and confidence of his chief. In examining too, the account of the bonds of amity, subsisting between Euryalus and Nisus, in one there appears a kind of superiority & guardianship, in the other, obedience — and obligation to return protection by protecting. This is by no means an unfounded conjecture. Bishop* Warton in commenting upon the episode, in which the Mantuan

* Bishop Warton.

bard has introduced the story of these two champions, has made it a foundation for giving high antiquity to the rank of squire in England.

At the period of the Trojan war, we find in the government of Greece, some thing extremely resembling the feudal system. The two Atreida were the superior lords - and the inferior princes, the barons of the middle ages. For we well know that those proud lords, while they paid homage to the head of their government, reserved themselves at any time ready to assert by arms their independent rights. If they would not call out their vassals, nothing effectual could be done. Much the same temper prevailed among the Grecian chieftains. Achilles dared not resist the orders of the haughty Agamemnon - but he withdrew his Myrmidons, and at a distance lowered upon the hopes of Greece.

Thus have we traced a remarkable similarity, in the warlike economy of

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tween two ages, in the individuals, and collective body. In order to prepare for war, in the time of peace, the exercise of arms must never cease. Hence, the origin of games in both ages - called in the chivalric days joust and tournaments, and among the Greeks πενταθλοι. How ardently were the rewards of both desired! What would not a knight of Christendom give, to gain the reward of victory from the fair hand of his mistress, in the presence of many a high born dame, and before assembled warriors! What made the bosom of every noble Greek beat high with expectation? What could exceed the chagrin of defeat - what the glory of success! Before the simple garland that decked the victor's brow, the diadem of the monarch lost its lustre, and its effulgence faded on the view.

Troy was to the ancients, what Jerusalem proved in the middle ages. The cause which called the armies of both periods from every quarter, to the fatal field of discomfiture and of death, was a common

in both instances. That which produced the ten years siege of antiquity, was not indeed of a religious nature, but its operation was no less strong- It was a violation of the rights of hospitality- the stranger profaned the hearth of his host.

The war of Troy, and the crusade alike, gave a spring and interest in the success or failure of their arms to the people of both ages. The adventurer's story, real or imaginary, lived in the fireside tale, long after they were supposed to have happened; and certain it is, that no tradition, ever related more absurd variations of his hero's peregrinations than some of those, which Homer, (or the author of the Odyssey whoever he was) has recorded of Ulysses. The giants of Romance were matched, though they carried more than one head on their shoulders, Homer's Cyclops had but one eye- The enchantresses were paralleled- by others, who metamor-

=plored men into ruine, and lured the mariner to his destruction. The good and evil genii were also anciently in vogue &c...

We read in the history of the middle ages of women warriors. Such too were known in the fables of antiquity, as all who have read the Eneid know. And this was a necessary consequence of the prevailing disposition of the times — when female hearts were led, to catch the fire of valour, and fought with an unwonted spirit, to brave that danger their nature prompts them to shun, even in the bustling part of battle.

The battles upon the plains of Ilium were generally a multitude of single combats. And so, before the wars of Edward the army of Richard acted as a collection of individual warriors; while individual prowess and valour more than the success of a good arrange-

ment, decided the engagement.

Superstition, wild, dark, fanciful & dominant alike extended her torpid and baleful wings, over the generations of each of the ages mentioned. Priests governed both. Religion became the tool of interest or of ambition, and often produced in the self satisfied enthusiast an extraordinary and unnatural degree of confidence or rashness. Though belief in a general providence should ever inspire sufficient dauntlessness, the human mind, particularly, under the oblivious spell of ignorance, finds an additional comfort in trusting that some more than mortal being makes the individual its peculiar care. Some saint or angel, the spirit of some departed friend, protecting him in the hour of battle and shielding him with a celestial panoply, bore through the stormy waves of war the soul of the knight of chivalry. Each, we are led to suppose, devoted himself to some particular saint, to whom he daily offered up his prayers, whose name he invoked, when entering upon any difficult or dangerous enterprise, to whose shrine he made his pilgrimage, and to whom he poured the returns of gratitude for victory or success. How be in peril and inextricable dilemma?

The saint appeared in person, and the way of escape was made manifest. We meet in the history of the middle ages, with examples constantly occurring of some such miraculous interposition. Just so in the relations of the Greek Romancer Homer, we find that all the inhabitants of heaven, were partial to peculiar individuals, on whom their attention was bestowed, and on whom in the hour of emergency, they stept forth to relieve. The Grecian hero too, as well as the knight, had his particular favorite among the deities of Olympus, and paying his sacrifice, demanded and expected protection by way of recompense. Saints were ever reputed to appear in some important crisis, to lead the champions of the righteous cause and turn in their favour the scale of victory. Tried Gods & Goddesses in the wars of Troy were often known to interpose. Venus was wounded, according to Homer. With respect to the vulnerability of the saints I have no accurate information; but Miltons ideas seem to have coincided in some degree with those of the Grecian bard. He represents an ethereal being, as suffering under the sword of an angel, but the wound immediately closed. It was from this principle

already mentioned, scarcely felt in particular protection, that the ancients were led to multiply deities, and the generation of the middle ages to stock their calendar with saints.

May not some similarity be traced in the two different systems of religious belief. The ancients did undoubtedly maintain that one supreme God created all things. And perhaps, by division, enabling themselves to contemplate his attributes better, they seperated virtues, passions, and vices, (alluding however to the operations of the evil principle) personifying and worshipping them, as inferior deities. The mind was caught by a religion, which, while it nourished fancy and captivated every chord of the imagination, so well adapted itself to the supine easiness of the human will and fickleness of human resolution. Too shallow theologists are we, however, to attempt a parallel of this nature. Sufficient is it to suggest a track, in which the ingenious enquirer may be directed, and where his curiosity must without failure

ample gratification.

While men were thus employed, the high born dames of Greece, as well as of chivalry, procured the labours of the loom, and wrought in lively records the heroic deeds of fathers, brothers, lovers and husbands. Youth, with Promethean art, lighted its torch at the blazing fount of valour and soon awoke its energies to action.

We shall conclude with remarking that from the downfal of both systems arose the reign of art and science. Men too, began the grand experiments of nations, in every form of government. Republics, aristocracies and monarchies with different fates, succeed each other in Greece. And when the star of Chivalry declined from its zenith, the drama of national vicissitude commenced. It set in night. Napoleon, a burning and baleful meteor swept with terrific train, from one extremity of the horizon to the other. So, Alexander rose — and through the fate of these two

conquerors was different, it is not unnecessary to notice their names; as this appearance serves to complete in some degree, the parallel we have been attempting to draw. . . .

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